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FLIGHTS

OF

FANCY.

By the Rev^d. THOMAS PENROSE,

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CURATE OF NEWBURY, BERKS.

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M.DCC.LXXV.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

HELMETS,

A

FRAGMENT.

THE

THE Scene of the following Event is laid in the Neighbourhood of Donington Caſtle, *in a Houſe built after the Gothic Taſte, upon a Spot famous for a bloody Encounter between the Armies of* Charles *and the Parliament.*

The Prognoſtication alludes to Civil Diſſention, which ſome have foretold would ariſe in England, in Conſequence of the Diſputes with America.

The HELMETS.

—'TWAS midnight—every mortal eye was closed
Thro' the whole mansion—save an antique Crone's,
That o'er the dying embers faintly watch'd
The broken sleep (fell harbinger of Death)
Of a sick Boteler.—Above indeed
In a drear gallery (lighted by one lamp
Whose wick the poor departing Seneschall
Did closely imitate,) paced slow and sad
The Village Curate, waiting late to shrive

The

The Penitent when 'wake. Scarce ſhewed the ray
To Fancy's eye the pourtrayed characters
That graced the wall—On this and t'other ſide
Suſpended, nodded o'er the ſteepy ſtair,
In many a trophy formed, the knightly groupe
Of helms and targets, gauntlets, maces ſtrong,
And horſes' furniture—brave monuments
Of antient Chivalry.—Thro' the ſtain'd pane
Low gleamed the Moon—not bright—but of ſuch power
As marked the clouds, black, threatning over head,
Full miſchief-fraught;—from theſe in many a peal
Growled the near thunder—flaſhed the frequent blaze
Of lightning blue.—While round the fretted dome
The wind ſung ſurly: with unuſual clank
The armour ſhook tremendous:—On a couch
Plac'd in the Oriel ſunk the Churchman down:

For who, alone, at that dread hour of night,
Could bear portentous prodigy?——

" I hear it," cries the proudly gilded Caſque
(Filled by the ſoul of one, who erſt took joy
In ſlaught'rous deeds) " I hear amidſt the gale
" The hoſtile Spirit ſhouting—once—once more
" In the thick harveſt of the ſpears we'll ſhine,
" There will be work anon."——
——" I'm awakened too,"
Replied the fable Helmet (tenanted
By a like inmate) " Hark!—I hear the voice
" Of the impatient Ghoſts, who ſtraggling range
" Yon ſummit, (crown'd with ruined battlements
" The fruits of civil diſcord) to the din
" The Spirits, wandering round this gothic pile,

" All

" All join their yell—the ſong is War and Death.—
" There will be work anon."

———" Call armourers, Ho!
" Furbiſh my vizor—*cloſe my rivets* up—
" I brook no dallying"———
———" Soft, my haſty friend,"
Said the black Beaver, " Neither of us twain
" Shall ſhare the bloody toil—War-worn am I,
" Bored by a happier mace, I let in fate
" To my once maſter,—ſince unfought, unuſed
" Penſile I'm fixed—yet too your gaudy pride
" Has nought to boaſt,—the faſhion of the fight
" Has thrown your gilt, and ſhady plumes aſide
" For modern foppery;—ſtill do not frown,
" Nor lour indignantly your ſteely brows,

" We've

" We've comfort left enough—The bookman's lore
" Shall trace our ſometime merit;—in the eye
" Of antiquary taſte we long ſhall ſhine:
" And as the Scholar marks our rugged front,
" He'll ſay, This *Creſſy* ſaw, that *Agincourt*:
" Thus dwelling on the proweſs of his fathers,
" He'll venerate their ~~ſkull~~ *ſhell*.—Yet, more than this,
" From our inactive ſtation we ſhall hear
" The groans of butchered brothers, ſhrieking plaints
" Of raviſhed maids, and matrons' frantic howls,
" Already hovering o'er the threatened lands
" The famiſh'd Raven ſnuffs the promiſed feaſt,
" And hoarſlier croaks for blood—'twill flow."

————" Forbid it, Heaven!
" O ſhield my ſuffering country!—ſhield it" prayed
The agonizing Prieſt.

" We've comfort left enough—The bookman's lore
" Shall trace our sometime merit;—in the eye
" Of antiquary tafte we long fhall fhine:
" And as the Scholar marks our rugged iron,
" He'll fay, This Greffy law, that Agincourt:
" Thus dwelling on the prowels of his fathers,
" He'll venerate their ſkill.—Yet, more than this,
" From our inactive fation we fhall hear
" The groans of butchered brothers, fhrieking plains
" Of ravifhed maids, and matrons' frantic howls,
" Already hovering o'er the threatened lands
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THE

CAROUSAL

Of ODIN.

FILL the honeyed bev'rage high,
Fill the Sculls, 'tis ODIN's cry:
Heard ye not the powerful call,
Thund'ring thro' the vaulted hall?
" Fill the meath, and ſpread the board,
" Vaſſals of the grieſly Lord."—

The portal hinges grate,—they come—
The din of voices rocks the dome.
In ſtalk the various forms, and dreſt
In various armour, various veſt,
With helm and morion, targe and ſhield,
Some *quivering launces couch*, ſome biting *maces wield*:
All march with haughty ſtep, *all* proudly ſhake the creſt.

The feaſt begins, the Scull goes round,
Laughter ſhouts—the ſhouts reſound.
The guſt of War ſubſides—E'en now
The grim Chief curls his cheek, and ſmooths his rugged brow.

" Shame to your placid front, ye Men of Death!"
Cries *Hilda* with diſordered breath.

Hell ecchoes back her ſcoff of ſhame
To th' inactive rev'ling Champion's name.
" Call forth the Song," ſhe ſcream'd;—the Minſtrels came——
The theme was glorious War, the dear delight
Of ſhining beſt in field, and daring moſt in fight.

" Joy to the Soul," the Harpers ſung,
" When, th' embattled ranks among,
" The ſteel-clad Knight, in vigour's bloom,
(" Banners waving o'er his plume)
" Foremoſt rides, the flower and boaſt
" Of the bold determined hoſt!"

With greedy ears the Gueſts each note devour'd,
Each ſtruck his beaver down, and graſped his faithful ſword.

The

The Fury mark'd th' auſpicious deed,
And bad the Sealds proceed.

" Joy to the Soul! a joy divine!
" When conflicting armies join;
" When trumpets clang, and bugles ſound;
" When ſtrokes of death are dealt around;
" When the ſword feaſts, yet craves for more;
" And every gauntlet drips with gore."—

The charm prevailed, up ruſh'd the maddened throng,
Panting for carnage, as they foam'd along,
Fierce ODIN's ſelf led forth the frantick band,
To ſcatter havock wide o'er many a guilty land.

MADNESS.

MADNESS.

SWELL the clarion, ſweep the ſtring,
Blow into rage the Muſe's fires!
All thy anſwers, Eccho, bring,
Let wood and dale, let rock and valley ring,
'Tis Madneſs ſelf inſpires.

Hail,

Hail, awful Madneſs, hail!
Thy realm extends, thy powers prevail,
Far as the Voyager ſpreads his ventrous ſail.
Nor beſt nor wiſeſt are exempt from *thee*;
Folly—Folly's only free.

Hark!—To the aſtoniſhed ear
The gale conveys a ſtrange tumultuous ſound.
They now approach, they now appear,—
Phrenzy leads her *Chorus* near,
And Dæmons dance around,—

Pride—Ambition idly vain,
Revenge, and Malice ſwell her train,—
Devotion warped—Affection croſt—
Hope in Diſappointment loſt—

And

And injured Merit with a downcaſt eye,
(Hurt by neglect) ſlow ſtalking heedleſs by.

Loud the ſhouts of Madneſs riſe,
Various voices, various cries,—
Mirth unmeaning—cauſeleſs moans,
Burſts of laughter,—heart-felt groans—
All ſeem to pierce the ſkies.—

Rough as the wintry wave, that roars
On *Thule*'s deſart ſhores,
Wild raving to the unfeeling air,
The fetter'd Maniac foams along,
(Rage the burthen of his jarring ſong)
In rage he grinds his teeth, and rends his ſtreaming hair.

No pleaſing memory left—forgotten quite
All former ſcenes of dear delight,
Connubial love—parental joy—
No ſympathies like theſe his ſoul employ,
——But all is dark within, all furious black Deſpair.

Not ſo the love-lorn maid,
By too much tenderneſs betrayed;
Her gentle breaſt no angry paſſion fires,
But ſlighted vows poſſeſs, and fainting, ſoft deſires.

She yet retains her wonted flame,
All—but in reaſon, ſtill the ſame.—
Streaming eyes,
Inceſſant ſighs,

Dim haggard looks, and clouded o'er with care,
Point out to Pity's tears, the poor diſtracted fair.
Dead to the world—her fondeſt wiſhes croſt,
She mourns herſelf thus early loſt.—

Now, ſadly gay, of ſorrows paſt ſhe ſings,
Now, penſive, ruminates unutterable things.
She ſtarts—ſhe flies—who dares ſo rude
On her ſequeſter'd ſteps intrude?—

'Tis he—the Momus of the flighty train—
Merry miſchief fills his brain.
Blanket-robed, and antick crown'd,
The mimick monarch ſkips around;
Big with conceit of dignity he ſmiles,
And plots his frolicks quaint, and unſuſpected wiles.—

Laughter was there—but mark that groan,
Drawn from the inmoſt ſoul!
" Give the knife, Demons, or the poiſoned bowl,
" To finiſh miſeries equal to your own."—

Who's this wretch, with horror wild?—
—'Tis Devotion's ruin'd child.—
Sunk in the emphaſis of grief,
Nor can he feel, nor dares he aſk relief.—

Thou, fair Religion, waſt deſign'd,
Duteous daughter of the ſkies,
To warm and chear the human mind,
To make men happy, good, and wiſe.
To point, where ſits in love arrayed,
Attentive to each ſuppliant call,

The God of univerſal aid,
The God, the Father of us all.

Firſt ſhewn by thee, thus glow'd the gracious ſcene,
'Till Superſtition, fiend of woe,
Bad Doubts to riſe, and Tears to flow,
And ſpread deep ſhades our view and heaven between.

Drawn by her pencil the Creator ſtands,
(His beams of mercy thrown aſide)
With thunder arming his uplifted hands,
And hurling vengeance wide.
Hope, at the frown aghaſt, yet ling'ring, flies,
And daſh'd on Terror's rocks, Faith's beſt dependence lies.

But

But ah!—too thick they croud,—too cloſe they throng,
Objects of pity and affright!—
Spare farther the deſcriptive ſong—
Nature ſhudders at the ſight.—
Protract not, curious ears, the mournful tale,
But o'er the hapleſs groupe low drop Compaſſion's veil.

FINIS.